

NO CENSORSHIP PERIOD
(A student paper from Freshman Composition)

As an American one of the most precious rights is that of freedom of speech. The idea of censorship is unacceptable as well as frightening. Although I am not in favor of excessive sex and violence in films, I feel that it should not be censored. I strongly believe there is no one man or group of men who knows what is best for all mankind. Decisions as to what one man considers entertainment should be theirs and theirs alone. Besides the restrictions imposed by the Motion Picture Production Code, there are a number of other significant issues to be considered. People seem to be more susceptible to visual stimulus, rather than written or verbal. Through the visual entertainment media we are being influenced, whether we believe it or not. We are being programmed. Decisions as to what scenes or ideas should or should not be left out are made by "professional judges." These judges are powerful and influential.

Movies influence how to think about reality by language which almost never can be neutral or objective. The camera can show only one perspective at a time. The movie's purpose is to persuade rather than inform, to entertain rather than enlighten. How many times have we heard people say, "I don't want to think when I go to the movies, I just want to be entertained." If one is not thinking, one is being programmed. Reality is selected or arranged to suit the purposes of the movie makers. And their purpose is to give the people what they want in order to profit, financially. Money creates power, power creates influence.

Writers, producers, and directors make decisions which reinforce some values, images and stereotypes more than others, in order to reach as wide an audience as possible. When looking at the Motion Picture Code of 1930, one almost has to laugh at the restrictions imposed. But, in 1930 those were the dominant social values of society. The code also reflects the personal values of those who created the code as well as organizational constraints, legal restraints, etcetera. These people are only individuals with their own personal perspective. Certainly, they can not please everyone, or convey everyone's values. There will always be restrictions of freedom of speech, because this is the American way. The majority rules what the majority thinks is best for the people.

Much of our response to reality is emotional and based on positive or negative association. Of course, most of these associations stem from direct personal experiences, yet I believe some are based on media images. The media does more than make associations and manipulate our emotions, it also provides us with information. People use information from entertainment programs, as they use information from the news, or personal experience. Most people are simple, they see facts in entertainment programming, which of course are fictional. I can not prove this but I can give an example. President Reagan refers to needing "Rambo" when dealing with terrorists. Does the President really believe that the character Rambo is real, or is he just one of these simple people who has been manipulated by the media to see fiction as fact? These fictional messages get stored in our memory along with factual knowledge, and are drawn upon interchangeably to explain reality.

That entertainment programming can influence our values is due to the fact that all communication has to have a "point of view." This point of view will certainly influence people, yet, how will this influence be determined? To censor sexually violent material would seem appropriate from a humanistic point of view, but not everyone shares this same point of view. Are these hopefully few individuals not allowed the same freedom of speech as the rest of the population? I say yes, to an individual's freedom of speech, regardless of its moral implications. In any society there will always be a division between good and bad, right and wrong, and innocent and guilty. The fear of sexually violent movies contributing to the aggressive behavior of some is not as frightening as censorship by judges. Our society is very well equipped to repress anyone who doesn't conform, censorship is not the only solution to a moral issue.

Individuals must be critical of what is presented to them. People must be accountable to themselves as well as to society. Viewers must learn to identify media messages and draw their own conclusions. And, finally people must accept responsibility for their actions regardless of the consequences. I conclude, that it is our duty as Americans to defend our Constitution. That censorship should not be permitted in any way, shape, or form.

